

Commissioner Susan Ness

April 28, 1997

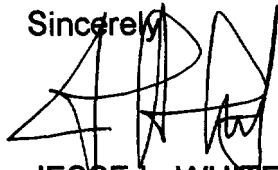
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- adult learners attempting to enter or re-enter the workforce (including welfare-to-work participants), as well as those needing skills upgrades, will not have access to current workforce training opportunities;
- local governments will lack the ability to more easily make their services conveniently available to their customers.

In short, if an affordable rural Universal Service rate structure is not put into place, the rural areas of Appalachia will become undesirable areas in which to live, operate a business, have access to adequate educational training, or secure adequate health care. The nation must have a carefully crafted subsidy program that takes into account the need to reduce distance-based telephone charges in education and telehealth-related services in rural areas.

I encourage you and your fellow Commissioners to keep these needs of Appalachia in mind as you craft your final rules on Universal Service. Please let me know if you or your staff desire any additional information about our telecommunications work in the region.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jesse L. White, Jr.", written over the word "Sincerely,".

JESSE L. WHITE, JR.
Federal Co-Chairman



NATIONAL
ASSOCIATION OF
COUNTY & CITY
HEALTH OFFICIALS

440 FIRST STREET, NW, SUITE 450
WASHINGTON, DC 20001
(202) 783-5550 (202) 783-1583 (FAX)

April 28, 1997

The Honorable Susan Ness
Commissioner
Federal Communications Commission
Room 802
1919 M Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20554

Reference: Universal Service and Telehealth

Dear Commissioner Ness:

The National Association of County and City Health Officials would like to reiterate, with a sense of urgency, its strong support for favorable action by the FCC in implementing the provisions of the 1996 Telecommunications Act that concern rural health care providers. These provisions will have important ramifications for rural health departments and health care providers, and therefore, for the health of the nation. There are about 3,000 local health departments nationwide. Forty-four percent of these health departments serve populations less than 25,000, and about two-thirds serve populations less than 50,000.

Assuring that all local health departments have access to telecommunications is critically important. For example, local health departments need to obtain instantaneous information regarding epidemics and imminent public health threats, such as food-borne disease or cases of highly infectious disease, in order to take prompt steps to protect the citizens in their jurisdictions. They need timely access to medical information and treatment protocols, which many can use in their own clinics and health centers. In addition, access to public health and medical information is needed so that it can be passed on to other providers. Local health departments are charged with assuring the quality of the health systems in their areas and for assuring the health of the population. Immediate, up-to-date information is essential.

Local health departments need connectivity also for distance-based training and learning. Many video training programs currently exist, and more would be developed if all rural health departments could easily connect.

For these reasons, we strongly support subsidization of rural health care providers, including rural public health departments, for distance charges and access to the Internet through Universal Service Funds. Providing telecommunications rates for rural health providers comparable to

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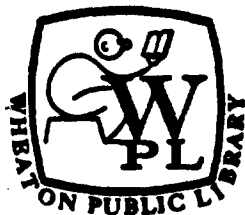
The Honorable Susan Ness
page 2

those for urban providers is sound policy that will serve the public interest in using the best available technology to preserve and promote the public's health.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Nancy Rawding". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above the printed name and title.

Nancy Rawding
Executive Director



WHEATON PUBLIC LIBRARY

225 N. Cross St., WHEATON, ILLINOIS 60187

Telephone: (630) 668-1374
or 668-3097
Fax: (630) 668-1465

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Sarah Meisels, Library Director

April 29, 1997

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Honorable Susan Ness, Commissioner
Federal Communications Commission
1919 M Street, NW - Room 844
Washington, DC 20554

Dear Commissioner Ness:

Re: CC Docket 96045--Universal Service to Libraries and Schools

On behalf of the Library Board of Trustees of the Wheaton Public Library and the residents of the City of Wheaton, Illinois, I am writing in strong support of the meaningful discounts for libraries and schools as envisioned by the Federal-State Joint Board in their Recommended Rules published last November.

The Recommended Rules allow libraries and schools significant discounts for telecommunications and critical, non-telecommunications services necessary to assure that all public libraries and schools are connected to the Internet and other on-line resources that are critical to living and working in an increasingly information-driven world.

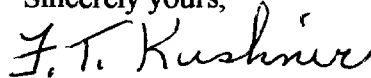
Congress passed the Telecommunications Act of 1996 with the clear intent of insuring that libraries and schools would be able to access the latest technology. By allowing significant discounts on telecommunications services, local wiring and Internet access, the Joint Board has accurately recognized the needs of poorer schools and libraries that cannot afford the internal wiring necessary to connect with the Internet. By allowing telecommunications companies and non-telco carriers to compete for the discounts, the Joint Board has also recognized the need for technologies to serve the diverse urban and rural areas of the country.

Favorable telecommunication rates are extremely important to libraries in order to access for their patrons the wealth of information available on the Internet. Libraries are particularly challenged in this decade, as they must provide both traditional library services and offer access to electronic information sources, all at a time when many library budgets are declining.

The Wheaton Public Library is among those libraries working hard to offer the latest in library technology in a community that expects it. We provide access to on-line databases with our direct Internet connection, because the currency of information is very important. Installing a direct connection is expensive. Paying monthly Internet access charges and charges for the line is expensive. It is a heavy burden on the library budget, and we would welcome more favorable rates, as would libraries far poorer than we are. In Wheaton, the public access Internet stations we offer are heavily used by recent graduates and older adults seeking information about employment opportunities and economic betterment. I venture to say those would be prime uses in all U.S. communities.

Thank you for your concern in this very important matter.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "F. T. Kushnir".

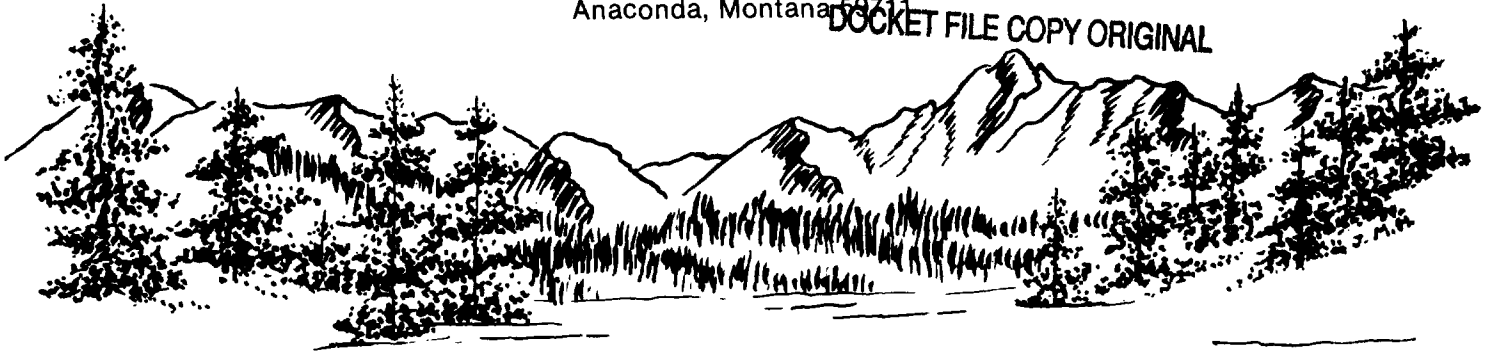
F. T. Kushnir, President
Library Board of Trustees

ANACONDA-DEER LODGE COUNTY

Courthouse - 800 South Main
Anaconda, Montana 59711

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Superintendent of Schools

Telephone (406)563-8421
Ext. 248

April 23, 1997

The Honorable Susan Ness, Commissioner
Federal Communication Commission
1919 M Street, Room 844
Washington, DC 20554

RE: CC Docket No. 96-45

Dear Commission Members:

I am the County Superintendent of Schools for Deer Lodge County in Montana, and I would like to thank each of you for your efforts to ensure that school districts and educational consortia will have affordable access to the Information Superhighway. In rural areas such as ours access to the Information Superhighway connects our students to people and experiences they would not otherwise access.

Our schools in Deer Lodge County have made tremendous strides in introducing technology into classrooms and making computer connected information sources available to every student. However, the increasing costs of these services in a time when school funding is critical makes the continuation of these services precarious at best.

The Telecommunications Act and the Federal-State Joint Board decision will guarantee that our school districts will continue to have opportunity to connect to the Internet and provide distance-learning experiences to our students. The \$2.25 billion per year will address the needs of all schools, and continue efforts to bring these services directly in the classroom where students learn. Including discounts for internal classroom connections needs to remain a corner stone of this plan and this plan is essential to the adequate preparation of tomorrow's work force.

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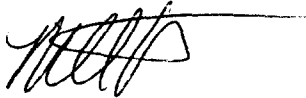
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Our students and schools need deep discounts for telecommunications services this year. I urge the FCC to fully support the Joint Board's discount plan for universal service to schools.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "M. O'Rourke", with a horizontal line extending to the right.

Michael O'Rourke MEd, LCPC
County Superintendent of Schools